



Príomhoifigeach Daoine

Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse
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Mr. Mark Kelly, TD

11 April 2025

PQ 16214/25 (Health) – To ask the Minister for Health her plans to ensure consultants in public hospitals operate under a seven-day roster.

Dear Deputy,

I refer to your recent Parliamentary Question which was sent to the HSE for response.

The Minister for Health, in collaboration with the Health Service Executive (HSE), is committed to ensuring that consultants in public hospitals operate under an extended working day/week roster as part of the Public Only Consultant Contract 2023.

The contract is central to the ongoing reform efforts within the public healthcare system and is designed to enhance access to care, improve patient outcomes, and deliver high-quality services across all days of the week.

The Public Only Consultant Contract, implemented in March 2023, outlines and supports key measures to facilitate movement towards a seven-day service, with resulting improvements and benefits to patient flow.

These measures include:

1. **Expanded Working Hours:** Consultants working under this contract can be rostered, to provide services beyond traditional core hours, including evenings and weekends (8 am to 10 pm Mon – Friday and 8 am to 6 pm Saturday).
2. **Flexible Work Patterns:** The contract allows for flexible working arrangements, including rosters which contribute to a more robust service. The flexibility is intended to ensure that our consultants are present to provide consultant delivered patient services across the week, while also supporting Consultants to balance professional and personal responsibilities, ensuring a sustainable work-life balance.
3. **Recruitment and Retention:** As of March 2025, almost 3000 consultants (61% of employed consultants)¹, have signed the Public Only Consultant Contract, reflecting a positive response to the improved terms and conditions offered therein.
4. **Ongoing Workforce Development:** The HSE is focusing on workforce development and ensuring that consultants are supported to work in a seven-day system. This includes providing the necessary infrastructure, support, and resources to enable seamless service delivery.

Through these measures, the Minister for Health and the HSE aim to ensure that consultants are consistently available to provide high-quality care across the week and are committed to ensuring that the necessary support and resources are in place to further strengthen our public health services. The implementation of the Public Only

¹ DIME data as of 14/04/2025. Total number of employed consultants 4815, total number of POCC'23 holders 2962

Consultant Contract 2023 represents a significant step forward in establishing a sustainable seven-day healthcare system, which will greatly benefit patients and healthcare staff alike.

The implementation of the Public Only Consultant Contract is a key strategic priority for the health services under Sláintecare and the current Public Service Agreement. The HSE is committed to ensuring our patients and service users see the benefits. All new consultants who are contracted to the POCC brings about immediate benefit, in that these new consultants dedicate their HSE contracted hours entirely to the public system. In addition, existing consultants who have signed up to POCC are dedicating themselves to changing how they work, either in terms of an extended working day and/or Saturday working. This ensures that our senior decision makers have a greater presence on-site, out of hours and at the weekend, delivering patient care when demand is highest. Consultant decision-making on site results in reduced emergency admissions, shorter lengths of stay and more complete care plans for discharge. An initial emphasis is being placed on Urgent & Emergency Care and waiting lists. For example, there are already new work arrangements, with hospitals reporting Saturday working in EDs by consultants and additional outpatient clinics in evenings and Saturdays.

Our new Health Regions are reviewing all services and contracts to ensure maximum benefit is being derived from the contract, including weekend and extended working hours. They will be supported in this by the Framework Agreement concluded in accordance with the provisions of Clause 30.4 of Towards 2016 which continues to apply to our Services. The Framework Agreement provides a process for the introduction of an extended working day / week on a structured basis within the basic weekly contracted working hours of health employees.

I trust this is of some assistance.

Yours sincerely,

Mairéad Ryan
National HR